PART TWO OF THREE
BATMAN
DARK KNIGHT
Dark City
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
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DARK KNIGHT, DARK CITY PART II

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Look what's coming out of the mud.
Its scent is as corrupt as its flesh is prettily pale and putrid.
For many years it has lain a-moulding in the ground of Gotham.
And now it has shaken off its worms and its oblivion, has dragged itself from its cold bed, just to be with you.
For you are the Batman.
And I am Gotham.
And the sweet thing only wants to hold you, Batman.
And the sweet thing only wants to hold you, Batman. As I want to hold you. I want you, Batman.
I will have you very soon.
But first . . .
But first, the dance . . .

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THIS IS JUST GREAT. SURROUNDED BY CORPSES.
CORPSES!
YOU'VE FINALLY SURPASSED YOURSELF THIS TIME, RIDDLER.
BOSSSH!
GNNNN
FINGERS DIGGING INTO MY SCALP, KNEE IN MY BACK, I'M EATING GRAVE MUD. THIS ONE'S STRONG. GOTTA PUT HIM AWAY...
UNGNNGH
BUT IF HE'S DEAD, HOW DO I HURT HIM?
LIKE THIS?
THAT WAS SOME GROAN, FOR A CORPSE.
LET'S SEE JUST HOW DEAD YOU REALLY ARE, MISTER...

HE'S GOT JIMMY, RIDDLER.
SO I SEE.
IF JIMMY ISN'T CAREFUL HE'LL END UP A RATHER MORE AUTHENTIC CORPSE THAN HE ALREADY IS...
HUMH?
IT'S STICKING TO ME. BREATH LIKE A SEWER...
DON'T THEY MAKE A LOVELY COUPLE! A TOMBSTONE TANGO! A CATACOMB CANCAN!
A VERITABLE DANSE MACABRE!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE BOSS? NEVER SEEN HIM SO CRAZY. OR SO BLOODTHIRSTY, FOR THAT MATTER.
WHO KNOWS. MAYBE IT'S MID-LIFE CRISIS OR SUMTHIN'.

MORE CORPSES, SWARMING ALL OVER ME. SEWER-BREATH'S NOT LETTING GO, SO I SNAP HIS ARM AT THE HUMERUS.
IT CRACKS LIKE ROTTEN TIMBER.
INTERESTING.
NOW THE CORPSES START FALLING. DEAD AGAIN. ALL EXCEPT ONE. HE'S RUNNING. HE'S THE ONE THAT GROANED WHEN I HIT HIM.
THE ONE JUST PLAYING DEAD...
LET'S PLAY A LITTLE NECROMANCY, CORPSE BOY...
URRGEHHHH
JIMMY'S DOWN.
AND JIMMY MUSTN'T TALK TO THE BATMAN ABOUT OUR PROJECT.
WHICH IS WHY AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE WAS PLACED IN THE MAKE UP AROUND JIMMY'S NECK.
"SMALL BUT EFFECTIVE. JUST LIKE ME."
BMMMM
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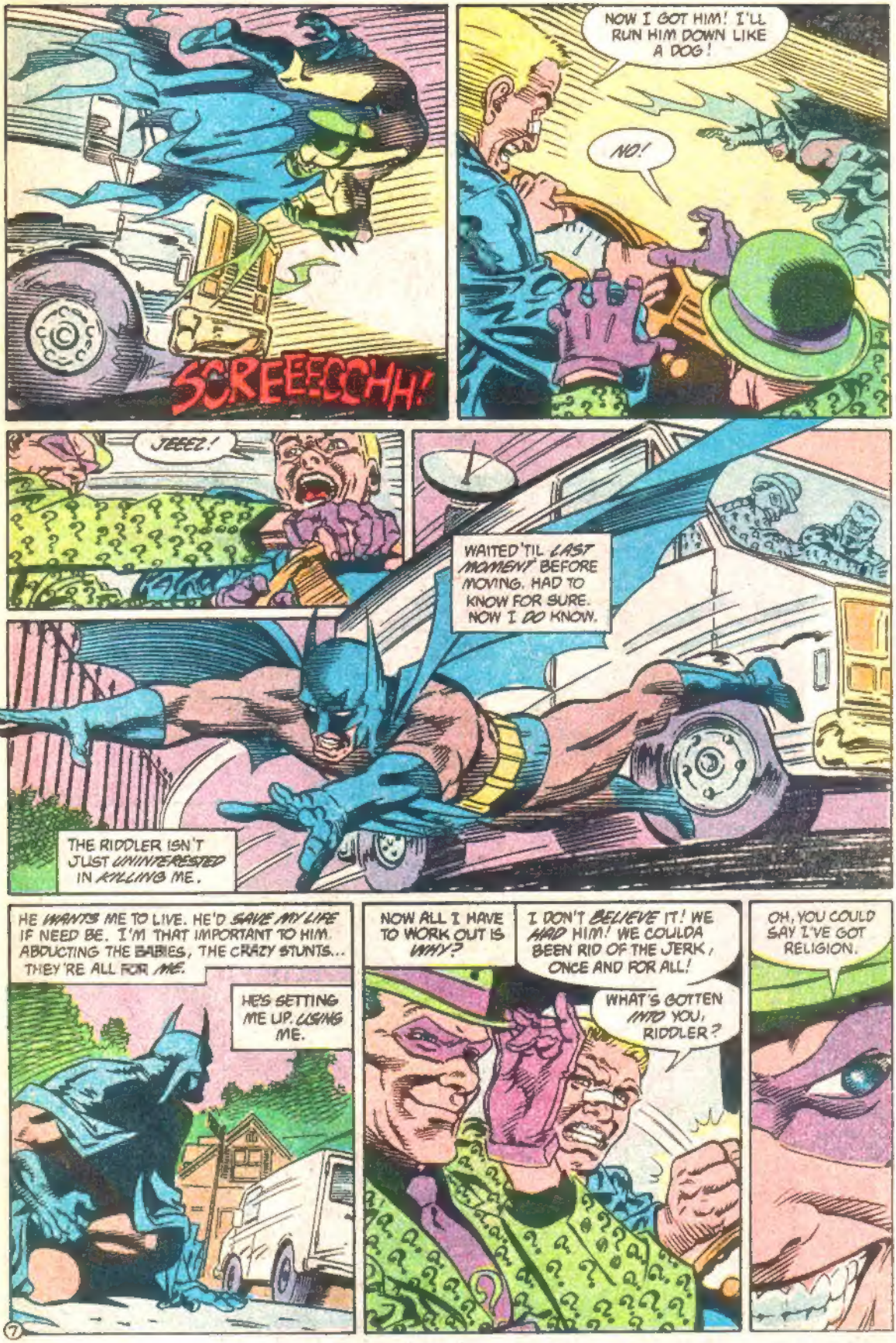
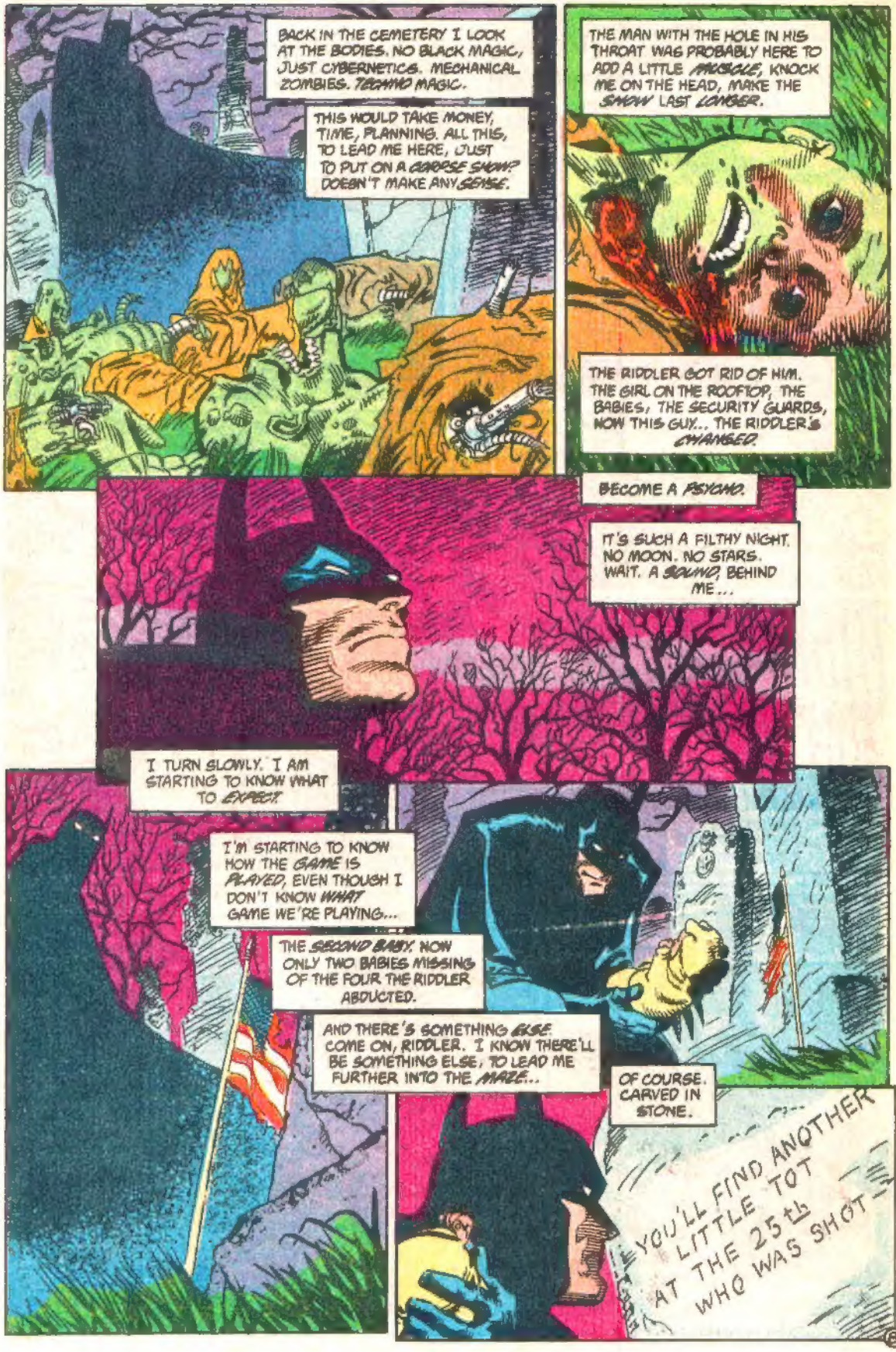
YOU KILLED JIMMY! ONE OF OUR OWN! WHAT FOR? I MEAN, WHAT ARE WE DOING? PLAYING GAMES WITH BATMAN?
JIMMY WAS A BUDDY.
AND YOU'LL BE AS DEAD AS JIMMY IF YOU DON'T SHUT UP AND DRIVE.
WE'RE NOT PLAYING GAMES, MORON. WE'RE PLAYING FOR KEEPS.
DEAD FOR REAL NOW. THROAT BLOWN OPEN.
AND THEN I HEAR THE ENGINE.
THE HARSH CLASH OF GEARS, THE WHEELS SCREAMING..
THE GRASS CRISP BENEATH MY FEET AS I RUN THE CHILL OUT OF MY BONES...
THIS HAD BETTER BE WORTH IT, RIDDLER. EVER SINCE YOU FOUND THAT OLD BOOK, YOU BEEN ACTING LIKE A NUT, YOU KNOW?
YOU STARTING TO MAKE THE JOKER SEEM POSITIVELY SENSIBLE.
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING, CHUCK. I'M SEEING THINGS CLEARER NOW. I'VE GOT AN INNER VOICE THAT'S GUIDING...
AHHHHHH!
JEEZ, IT'S THE BAT!


SCREEEECHH!
NOW I GOT HIM! I'LL RUN HIM DOWN LIKE A DOG!
NO!
JEEEZ!
WAITED 'TIL LAST MOMENT! BEFORE MOVING. HAD TO KNOW FOR SURE. NOW I DO KNOW.
THE RIDDLER ISN'T JUST UNINTERESTED IN KILLING ME.
HE WANTS ME TO LIVE. HE'D SAVE MY LIFE IF NEED BE. I'M THAT IMPORTANT TO HIM. ABDUCTING THE BABIES, THE CRAZY STUNTS... THEY'RE ALL FOR ME.
HE'S SETTING ME UP. USING ME.
NOW ALL I HAVE TO WORK OUT IS WHY?
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! WE HAD HIM! WE COULDA BEEN RID OF THE JERK, ONCE AND FOR ALL!
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, RIDDLER?
OH, YOU COULD SAY I'VE GOT RELIGION.


BACK IN THE CEMETERY I LOOK AT THE BODIES. NO BLACK MAGIC, JUST CYBERNETICS. MECHANICAL ZOMBIES. TECHNO MAGIC.
THIS WOULD TAKE MONEY, TIME, PLANNING. ALL THIS, TO LEAD ME HERE, JUST TO PUT ON A GROSS SHOW? DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.
THE MAN WITH THE HOLE IN HIS THROAT WAS PROBABLY HERE TO ADD A LITTLE REALISM, KNOCK ME ON THE HEAD, MAKE THE SHOW LAST LONGER.
THE RIDDLER GOT RID OF HIM. THE GIRL ON THE ROOFTOP, THE BABIES, THE SECURITY GUARDS, NOW THIS GUY... THE RIDDLER'S CHANGED.
BECOME A PSYCHO.
IT'S SUCH A FILTHY NIGHT. NO MOON. NO STARS. WAIT. A SOUND, BEHIND ME...
I TURN SLOWLY. I AM STARTING TO KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT.
I'M STARTING TO KNOW HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED, EVEN THOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHAT GAME WE'RE PLAYING...
THE SECOND BABY. NOW ONLY TWO BABIES MISSING OF THE FOUR THE RIDDLER ABDUCTED.
AND THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. COME ON, RIDDLER. I KNOW THERE'LL BE SOMETHING ELSE, TO LEAD ME FURTHER INTO THE MAZE...
OF COURSE. CARVED IN STONE.
YOU'LL FIND ANOTHER LITTLE TOT AT THE 25th WHO WAS SHOT

From the confessions of Jacob Stockman, 1793.
A great winged creature did fill the doorway of my temple, surely a creation of the Daemon, intent on our Mortal destruction.
Thomas Jefferson, whose rashness had first opened the door, did fall back, into mine own arms, and there was much screaming and panicking...
You will remember, charitable reader, how I and my colleagues had performed a black and vile ritual, the ceremony of the bat.
The Daemon Barbathos had been summoned and all that stood between us and the complete control of said Daemon was the sacrifice of a young maiden, the Human Bat...
...the sacrificial victim, who had undergone the prescribed preparations of the ritual, and who now stirred on the altar...
Where only moments earlier I had been poised, with sharp knife in my hand and unspeakable wickedness in my soul, to kill her, to give her to the Daemon.
I saw - oh how my tears fall onto the page as I write! -- I saw the young girl gaze in terror as the effect of the potions we had given her began to subside...
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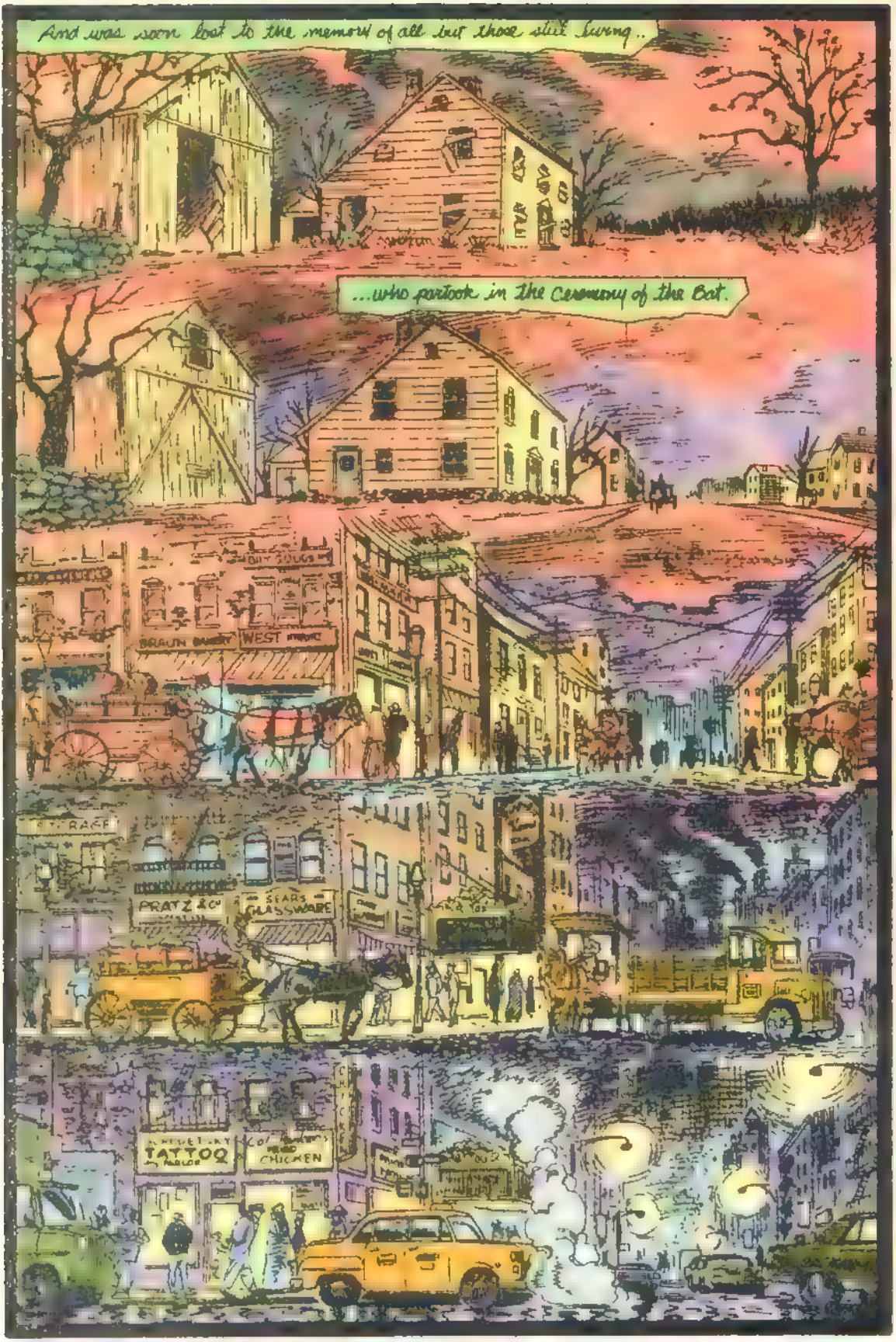
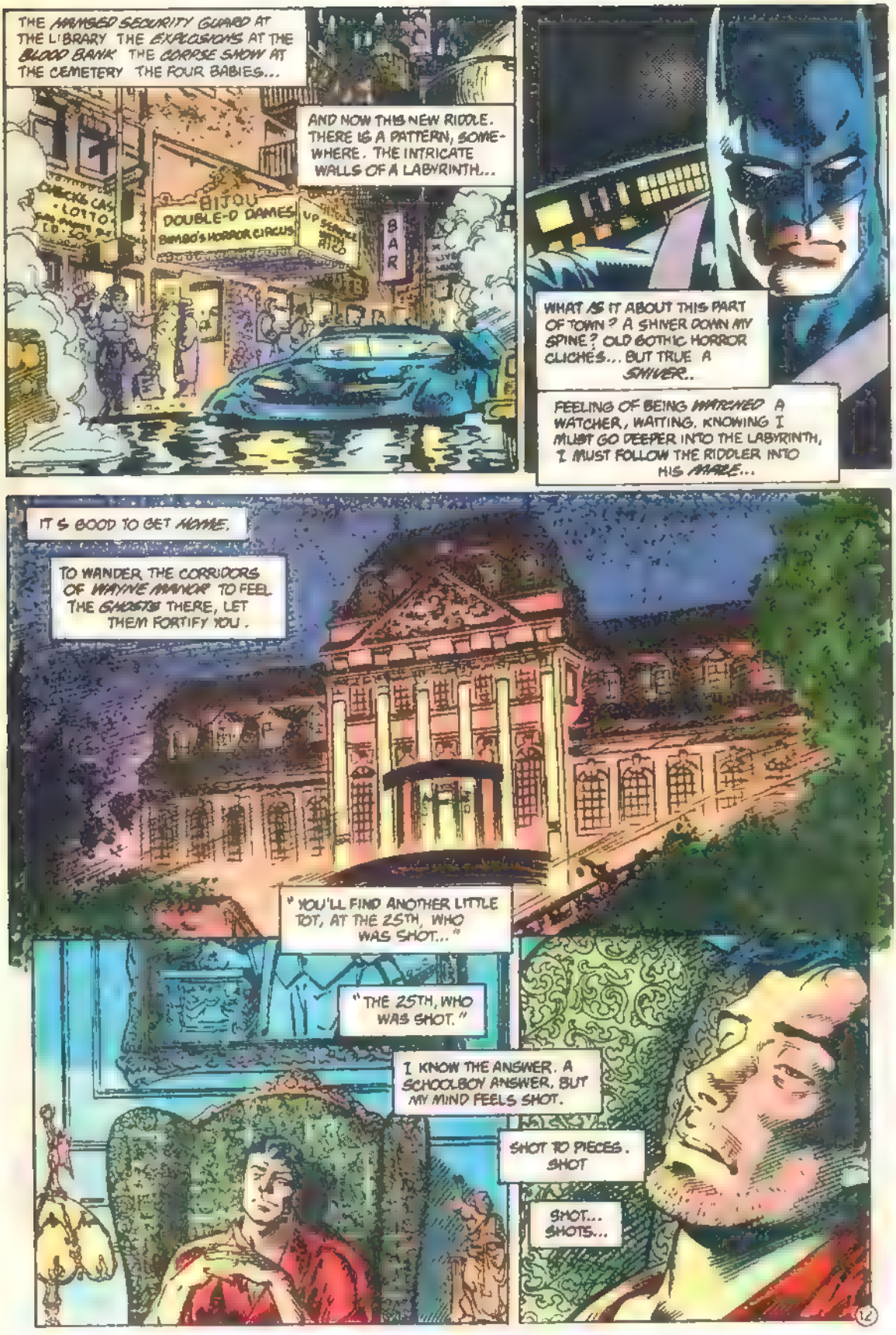
But we cared only for our own safety. All notion of controlling the Daemon forgot, we wished only to save our worthless selves.
We all did scurry like rats through the temple door. Like rats, I say.
And when we were without did we not shut and seal that door? Did we not entomb, in the Black Temple, the young girl, with the Winged Beast, and with the summoned, yet uncontrolled Daemon?
Aye, we did. We did, and may we all be Damned for doing so...
None of us returned to the Temple & sold Stockman's Farm and left for Canada.
Another of us committed suicide, another lost his life at Saratoga, Thomas Jefferson threw himself into politicks. Of the others I know not
My underground Black Temple was built over and over.


And was soon lost to the memory of all but those still living..
...who partook in the Ceremony of the Bat.
BRAUN BAKERY
WEST
PRATZ & Co
SEARS GLASSWARE
TATTOO
CHICKEN


THE MANGLED SECURITY GUARD AT THE LIBRARY THE EXPLOSIONS AT THE BLOOD BANK THE CORPSE SHOW AT THE CEMETERY THE FOUR BABIES...
AND NOW THIS NEW RIDDLE. THERE IS A PATTERN, SOMEWHERE. THE INTRICATE WALLS OF A LABYRINTH...
BIJOU
DOUBLE-D DAMES
BUMBO'S HORROR CIRCUS
BAR
WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS PART OF TOWN? A SHIVER DOWN MY SPINE? OLD GOTHIC HORROR CLICHÉS... BUT TRUE A SHIVER..
FEELING OF BEING WATCHED A WATCHER, WAITING. KNOWING I MUST GO DEEPER INTO THE LABYRINTH, I MUST FOLLOW THE RIDDLER INTO HIS MAZE...
IT'S GOOD TO GET HOME.
TO WANDER THE CORRIDORS OF WAYNE MANOR TO FEEL THE GHOSTS THERE, LET THEM FORTIFY YOU.
"YOU'LL FIND ANOTHER LITTLE TOT, AT THE 25TH, WHO WAS SHOT..."
"THE 25TH, WHO WAS SHOT."
I KNOW THE ANSWER. A SCHOOLBOY ANSWER, BUT MY MIND FEELS SHOT.
SHOT TO PIECES. SHOT
SHOT... SHOTS...
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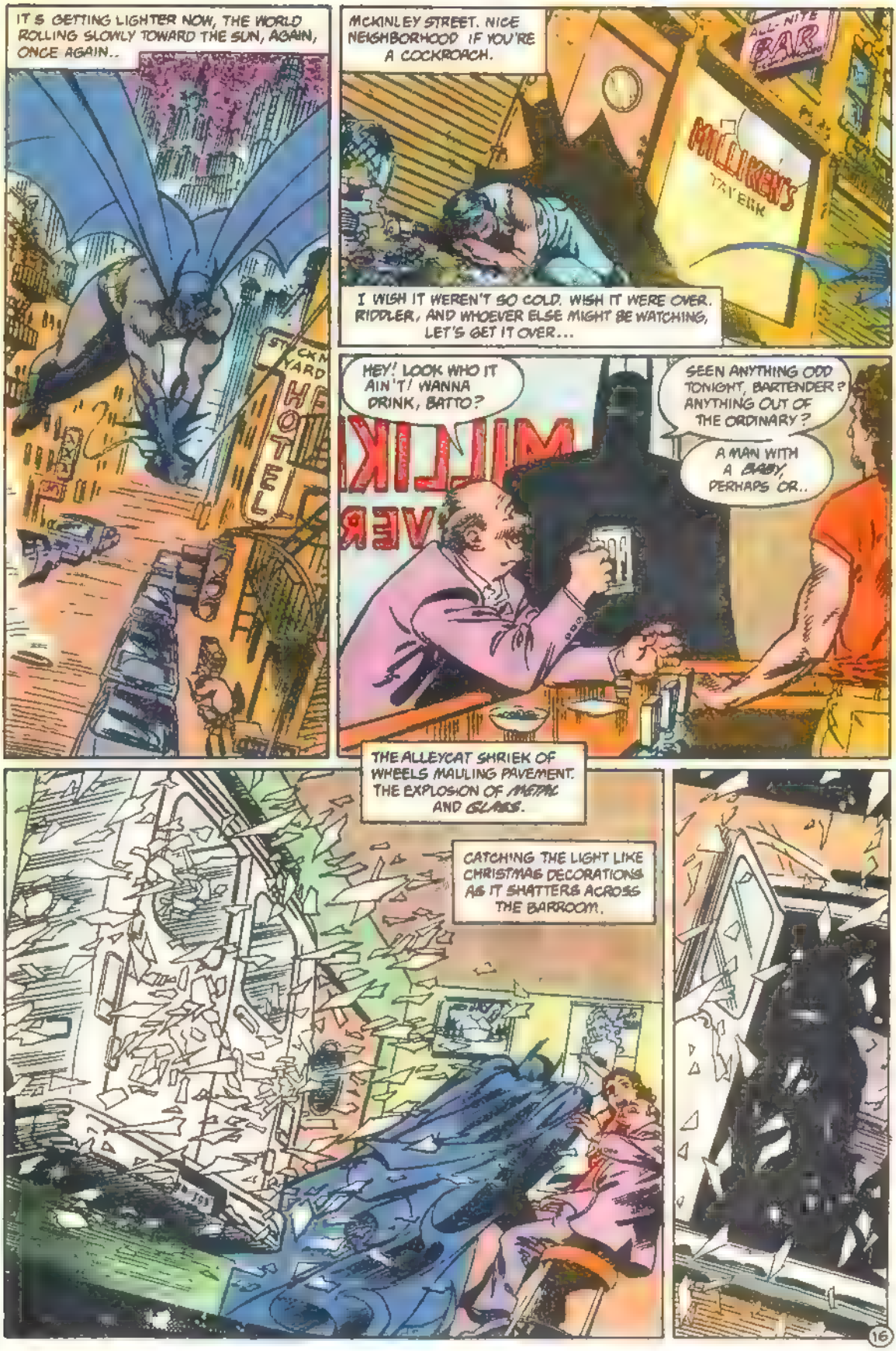
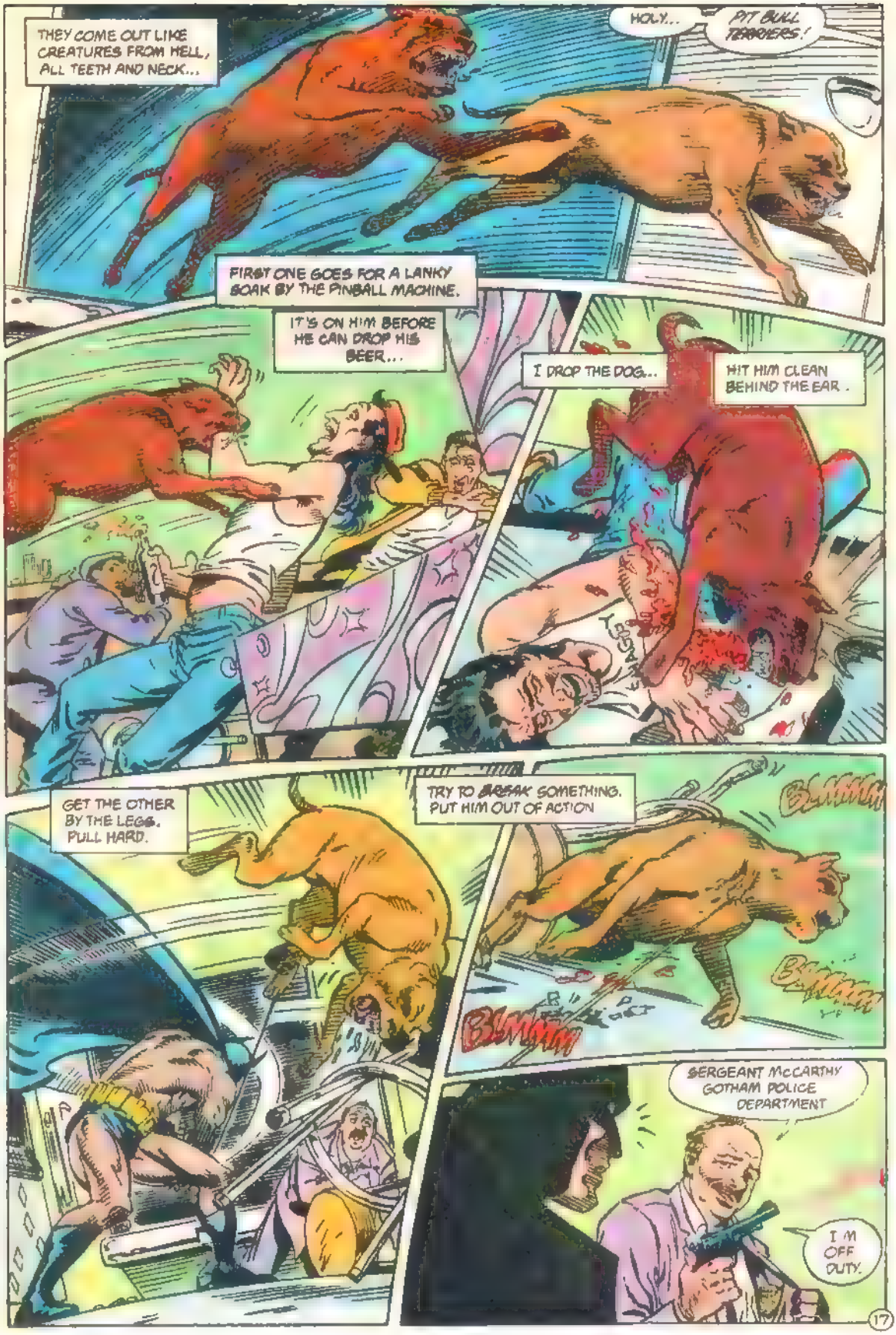
SHOTS. I HEAR SHOTS. ECHOES OF SHOTS NOT YET FIRED. BUT I KNOW THEY WILL BE FIRED.
MARK OF ORRO
MY PARENTS AND I LEAVE THE MOVIE AND WE WALK DOWN UNKNOWN, UNLIT STREETS...
A LABYRINTH OF STREETS, MOVING, SHIFTING, CAJOLING, BECKONING, FORCING US ONWARD AND ONWARD TOWARD THE PLACE...
I WANT TO WARN MY PARENTS BUT I CAN'T SPEAK. I'M MUTE WITNESS, GALLOPING TOWARD MY OWN MISERY, TOWARD THE ANVIL ON WHICH MY LIFE WILL BE BENT OUT OF SHAPE..
THE CITY WON'T LET US GO. IT'S PUSHING US TOWARD THE PLACE...
McKINLEY STREET COFFEE SHOP
THE MUGGER, THE GUN, THE SHOTS, MY MOTHER'S EYES..
I CANNOT STOP THEM. THE CITY IS PULLING US TO WHERE HE WAITS. IN THE SHADOWS
HIM THE ONE THE ONE WHO IS WAITING FOR ME...
THE CITY HAS MADE ME...

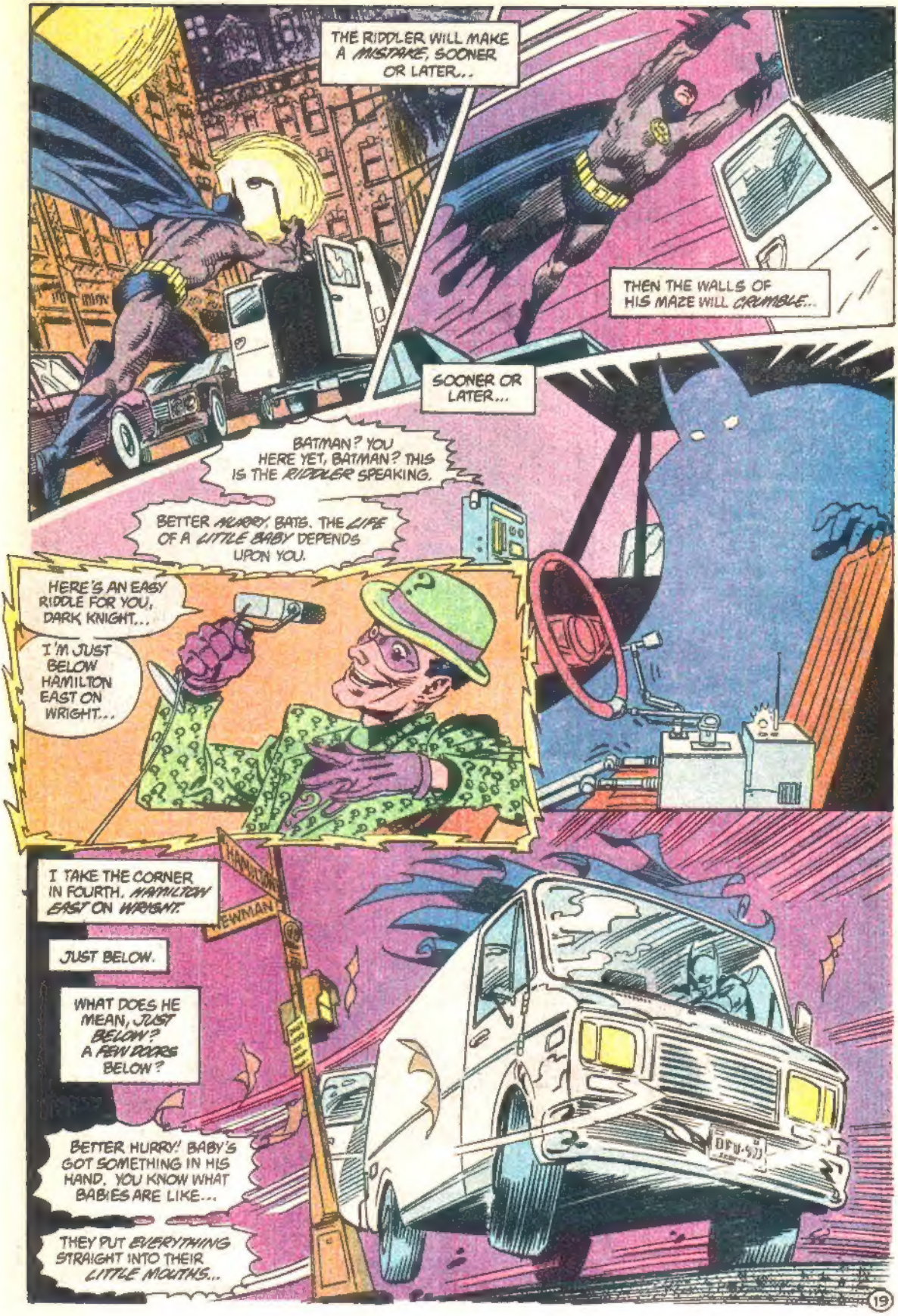
NO!!!!
MY GOD. A DREAM. THE OLD DREAM... BUT DIFFERENT, BUT...
THE ANSWER. THE ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE THE DREAM HAS GIVEN IT TO ME...
"THE 25TH, WHO WAS SHOT..."
MCKINLEY STREET. THAT NIGHT, YEARS AGO, WE PASSED MCKINLEY STREET. THE MIND STORES EVERYTHING...
MCKINLEY, TWENTY-FIFTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. ASSASSINATED, SHOT. BUT...
BUT DOES THIS MEAN THE RIDDLER KNOWS ABOUT THE DEATH OF MY PARENTS NEAR MCKINLEY? ABOUT ME BEING BRUCE WAYNE?
McKINLEY STREET COFFEE SHOP
OR IS IT A COINCIDENCE YES. IT MUST BE HE CAN'T KNOW
HE CAN'T KNOW. BUT IT'S TOO CLOSE TO BE A COINCIDENCE.

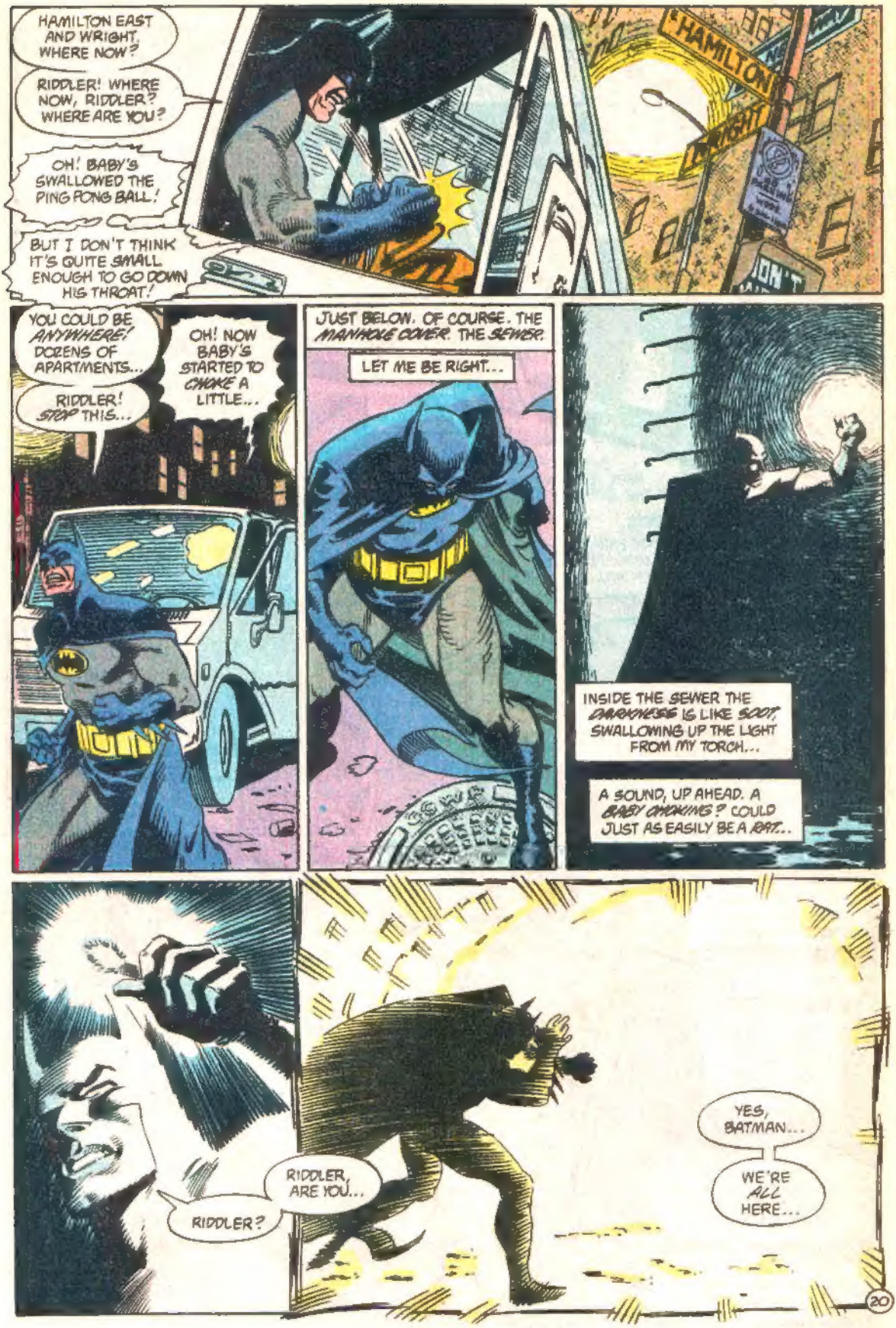
THE CITY HAS MADE ME.
WHAT DID THAT MEAN?
WE'RE GONNA SCORCH HIM, THAT IT? RUN HIM RAGGED, THEN BURN HIS BUTT?
HAVE US A BAT BARBECUE I LIKE IT
WHAT A SPLENDID IMAGINATION YOU HAVE, CHUCK. BUT I MERELY TOLD YOU TO SEE THE FLAMETHROWERS WERE PREPARED.
WE WON'T BE USING THEM, JUST YET ONE OR MORE TUNKS OF THE SCREW FIRST.
BUT WE DO GET TO BURN HIM, EVENTUALLY?
HAVE NO FEAR, THE BATMAN SHALL BE KILLED.
AND HOW IS THE LITTLE ONE, FRATER?
YOU'RE SURE THESE TINY PINS ARE JUST THE RIGHT SIZE?
YEAH, RIDDLER, BUT I THINK THE BRAT'S JUST DONE A...
THEN CHANGE HIM, IMBECILE AND BE CAREFUL WE MUST KEEP THEM ALIVE...
"THREE BABIES WERE STOLEN BUT WERE NOT KILLED BUT INSTEAD GIVEN BACK TO THEIR MOTHERS."
THREE BABIES? BUT WE STOLE FOUR..
MMMMMMMM, CHUCK
ARE THE... ARMS READY?
YEAH. WE MANAGED TO GET THEM INTO THE BACK OF THE VAN.
WEREN'T EASY, THOUGH..
"THEY TOOK HALF OF STEFAN'S ARM WITH THEM.."

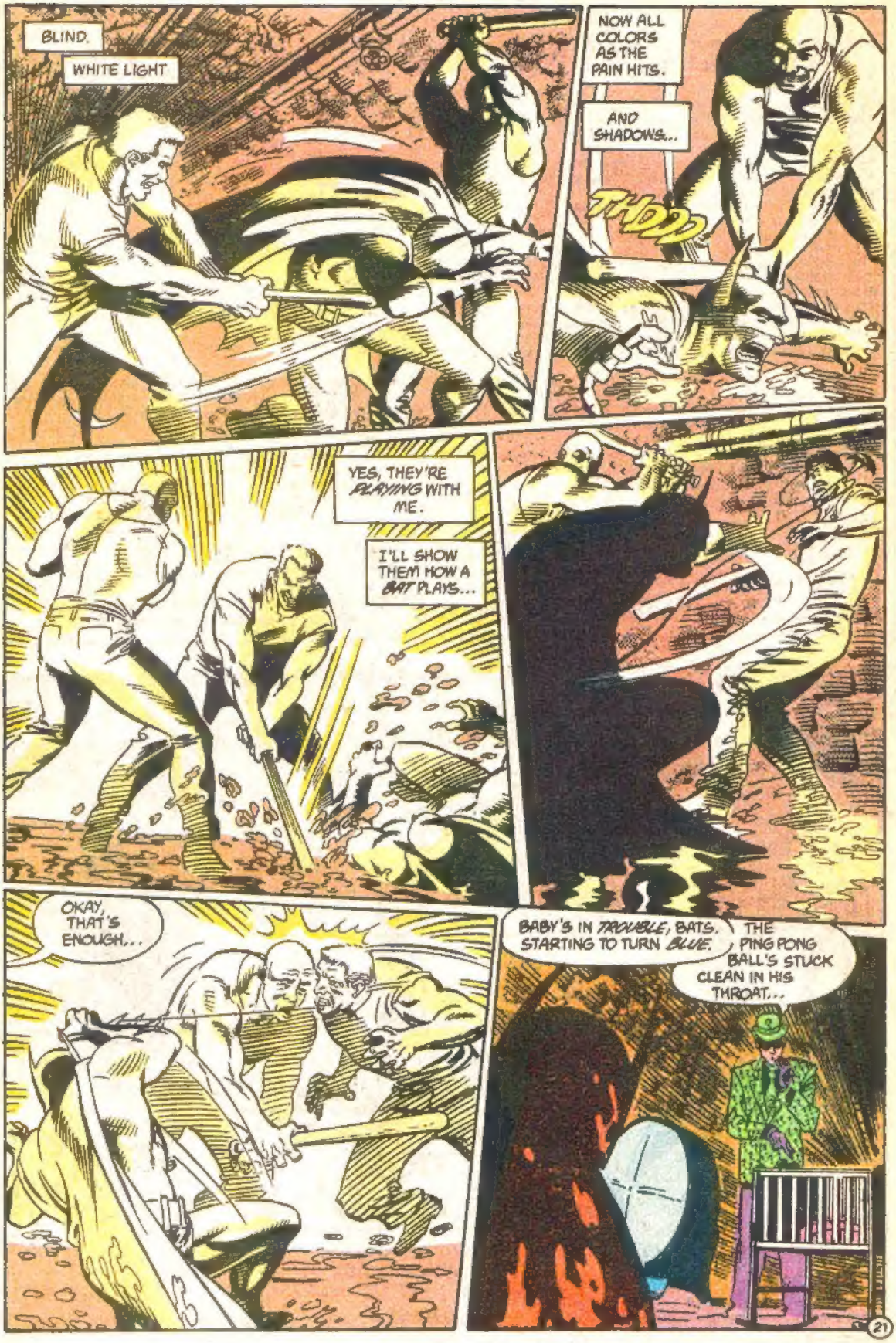

IT'S GETTING LIGHTER NOW, THE WORLD ROLLING SLOWLY TOWARD THE SUN, AGAIN, ONCE AGAIN..
HOTEL
MCKINLEY STREET. NICE NEIGHBORHOOD IF YOU'RE A COCKROACH.
ALL-NITE BAR
MILLIKEN'S TAVERN
I WISH IT WEREN'T SO COLD. WISH IT WERE OVER. RIDDLER, AND WHOEVER ELSE MIGHT BE WATCHING, LET'S GET IT OVER...
HEY! LOOK WHO IT AIN'T! WANNA DRINK, BATTO?
SEEN ANYTHING ODD TONIGHT, BARTENDER? ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY?
A MAN WITH A BABY, PERHAPS OR..
THE ALLEYCAT SHRIEK OF WHEELS MAULING PAVEMENT. THE EXPLOSION OF METAL AND GLASS.
CATCH'NG THE LIGHT LIKE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS AS IT SHATTERS ACROSS THE BARROOM.


THEY COME OUT LIKE CREATURES FROM HELL, ALL TEETH AND NECK...
HOLY...
PIT BULL TERRIERS!
FIRST ONE GOES FOR A LANKY SOAK BY THE PINBALL MACHINE.
IT'S ON HIM BEFORE HE CAN DROP HIS BEER...
I DROP THE DOG...
HIT HIM CLEAN BEHIND THE EAR.
GET THE OTHER BY THE LEGS. PULL HARD.
TRY TO BREAK SOMETHING. PUT HIM OUT OF ACTION
BAMMM
BAMMM
BAMMM
SERGEANT McCARTHY GOTHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT
I'M OFF DUTY.

BATMAN, WATCH OUT!
THREE OF THEM...
PLEASE, SERGEANT McCARTHY. DON'T TRY SHOOTING IT IN YOUR CONDITION YOU'LL PLUG BOTH OF US...
HERE, BATMAN. TAKE THE KNIFE...
HOT BLOOD WASHES OVER MY HAND AND I FEEL THE DOG SIGH AND ITS WEIGHT ON ME AS ITS HEART PUNCTURES...
THE KNIFE SOMEONE GAVE ME THE KNIFE..
THE BARTENDER. HE'S RUNNING. WHY? WHY RUN?
DON'T JUST STAND HERE, BATTO. GET AFTER THEM.
I'LL LOOK AFTER THE BAR.
WHY GIVE ME A SILVER KNIFE?


THE RIDDLER WILL MAKE A MISTAKE, SOONER OR LATER...
THEN THE WALLS OF HIS MAZE WILL CRUMBLE...
SOONER OR LATER...
BATMAN? YOU HERE YET, BATMAN? THIS IS THE RIDDLER SPEAKING.
BETTER HURRY, BATS. THE LIFE OF A LITTLE BABY DEPENDS UPON YOU.
HERE'S AN EASY RIDDLE FOR YOU, DARK KNIGHT...
I'M JUST BELOW HAMILTON EAST ON WRIGHT...
I TAKE THE CORNER IN FOURTH. HAMILTON EAST ON WRIGHT.
HAMILTON
NEWMAN
JUST BELOW.
WHAT DOES HE MEAN, JUST BELOW? A FEW DOORS BELOW?
BETTER HURRY! BABY'S GOT SOMETHING IN HIS HAND. YOU KNOW WHAT BABIES ARE LIKE...
THEY PUT EVERYTHING STRAIGHT INTO THEIR LITTLE MOUTHS...


HAMILTON EAST AND WRIGHT, WHERE NOW?
RIDDLER! WHERE NOW, RIDDLER? WHERE ARE YOU?
OH! BABY'S SWALLOWED THE PING PONG BALL!
BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S QUITE SMALL ENOUGH TO GO DOWN HIS THROAT!
HAMILTON
WRIGHT
DON'T
YOU COULD BE ANYWHERE! DOZENS OF APARTMENTS...
RIDDLER! STOP THIS...
OH! NOW BABY'S STARTED TO CHOKE A LITTLE...
JUST BELOW. OF COURSE. THE MANHOLE COVER. THE SEWER.
LET ME BE RIGHT...
INSIDE THE SEWER THE DARKNESS IS LIKE SOOT, SWALLOWING UP THE LIGHT FROM MY TORCH...
A SOUND, UP AHEAD. A BABY CHOKING? COULD JUST AS EASILY BE A RAT...
RIDDLER?
RIDDLER, ARE YOU...
YES, BATMAN...
WE'RE ALL HERE...


BLIND.
WHITE LIGHT
NOW ALL COLORS AS THE PAIN HITS.
AND SHADOWS...
THUD
YES, THEY'RE PLAYING WITH ME.
I'LL SHOW THEM HOW A BAT PLAYS...
OKAY, THAT'S ENOUGH...
BABY'S IN TROUBLE, BATS. STARTING TO TURN BLUE.
THE PING PONG BALL'S STUCK CLEAN IN HIS THROAT...

SEE YOU LATER, BATMAN.
LATER, RIDDLER. I'LL DEAL WITH YOU LATER. FIRST THE KID... HAVE TO GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL...
NO. NO TIME. HE'S NOT BREATHING. NO TIME TO GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL.
I HIT THE BABY'S BACK BUT THE BALL DOESN'T BUDGE. NEATLY STUCK IN ITS GULLET. I FEEL MOLTEN BILE IN MY OWN GULLET AS I REALIZE IT'S MEANT TO BE NEATLY STUCK...
THE SADISTIC RUNT'S PLANNED IT THIS WAY..
NO. NO TIME FOR HOSPITAL. IF IT DOESN'T START BREATHING IN TWO MINUTES IT'LL BE OVER...
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO. YOU KNOW HOW TO DO IT.
IT'S CALLED A TRACHEOTOMY. AN INCISION OF THE PRINCIPAL AIR-PASSAGE, IN ORDER TO FACILITATE BREATHING...
YOU KNOW HOW TO DO IT...
YOU KNOW HOW TO DO IT...
DO IT.
CONTINUED